

Nadler Calls on City to Help NYC Families in Section 8 Housing Limbo

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NEW YORK, NY - Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), reiterated his call for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to come to the aid of thousands of local families in danger of falling through the cracks. At a press conference with New York Communities for Change, Nadler demanded that NYCHA make amends for an administrative error last year which led to the distribution of 2,600 worthless Section 8 vouchers to needy families.

Nadler delivered the following statement:

"Good Morning. Thank you New York Communities for Change for your important work on housing advocacy for New Yorkers, and thank you for inviting me to speak here today. I want to acknowledge my hardworking colleagues, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez and Public Advocate Bill DeBlasio.

"We are here to express our anger with the termination of 2,600 previously-issued Section 8 vouchers to low-income New Yorkers. I am also frustrated by the lack of progress by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the City to help those affected by this crisis.

"The Section 8 voucher program is a lifeline for the poorest and most vulnerable New Yorkers. For the working poor, the disabled, and people on public assistance, Section 8 vouchers are often a family's only chance of avoiding the shelter system.

"As you know, in mid-December 2009, NYCHA informed 2,600 low-income New Yorkers that their Section 8 vouchers would not be honored. Despite being urged by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in May 2009 to stop issuing new Section 8 vouchers because there was no money left to fund them, NYCHA continued to distribute new vouchers without any warning to recipients that their vouchers might be worthless.

"As a long-time advocate for affordable housing and the Section 8 program in particular, I am outraged that the New Yorkers most in need of assistance were promised a subsidy that would secure them affordable housing only to have that promise broken. I am further distressed that it has been almost six months since families were first informed that their vouchers were being revoked, and NYCHA and the City have so far failed to offer sufficient solutions to those families left stranded.

"In January, I, along with the New York City Congressional Delegation, wrote to Governor Patterson and Mayor Bloomberg, urging them to put into place a plan to assist every family affected by the voucher revocation. Although the State was able to help some of those affected, most have been left with no option other than to wait. Since December, twenty-seven of these families have gone back to the shelter system, while many more have lost their homes. Unless something is done quickly, even more families are expected to enter shelters, at a significant cost to the City. Data suggests that in New York City it costs approximately \$26,000 annually to provide someone with assistance in a homeless shelter, whereas a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher would provide a family affordable rental housing for only \$11,000 a year.

"The City needs to address this crisis. New York families in need should not be punished for NYCHA's overextension of its Section 8 program. Those whose vouchers were terminated include referrals from the New York City Department of Homeless Services, victims of domestic violence, intimidated witnesses, and children aging out of foster care, who are especially at-risk of homelessness. These are some of our most vulnerable citizens and we cannot turn our backs on them.

"In an economic recession, keeping people in their homes is essential. Without a safe and affordable home it is much harder to find a job, keep kids in school, and remain healthy. NYCHA's current crisis only further highlights the urgent need for more funding for rental assistance programs like Section 8. Now is the time in Washington to determine appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year, and Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez and I led 39 of our Congressional colleagues in a letter urging the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee to fully fund all existing Section 8 vouchers and to fund 250,000 new additional Section 8 vouchers for the upcoming fiscal year.

"I urge the City to do everything it can to help the families who continue to wait in limbo because of the termination of their vouchers. And I will continue to work with my colleagues to fight for increased funding for Section 8 housing. Thank you."